

Commander's Guidance for Senior Leader Ethics Education

EXPLORATION TOPIC: PROFESSION DISSONANCE - TENSIONS BETWEEN CULTURE AND INSTITUTION

The intent for this module, *Profession Dissonance - Tensions between Culture and Institution*, is to provide a platform of study and engagement with peers that will enhance understanding of tensions within the Army that provide fertile ground for ethical abuse. All military officers have experienced these tensions between what the institution espouses and what the culture promotes. These tensions will continue to characterize the environment in which senior officers and NCO's serve, if not get worse based on higher rank and responsibility. The higher the position and rank, the more complex and less precise issues become, coupled with the freedom to act independently without supervision. As one progresses upward, the ethical environment becomes more murky, and less subject to specific rules and simple solutions demonstrated in early entry training. A leader's usefulness to the nation and overall credibility will be fundamentally affected by his ability to enter into an environment where absolutes are hard to find, and where wise and ethical decisions have enormous day to day impact. These tensions require a strong foundation of ethical values tied with the courage to act in accordance with those values despite the cultural environment. Leaders and followers of moral character and professional identity are constantly assessed by what they do and fail to do - their behaviors and their actions.

In order to provide insight into the effects of these issues on the Army Profession, the module recommends an "analysis of tensions between Army culture and institutional requirements, perspective differences between application of policy on individuals or organizations, and the Army Value of Loyalty."

The first area for investigation is the tensions between Army culture and institutional requirements. Do we really do what we say we do? Does Leader development in the Army focus on competence decision makers without proper regard for character? What are the effects of zero-defect mentality? What are the inherent risks in Senior Leaders choosing their 'inner circle'? Does position or authority provide a breeding ground for unethical behavior? Do the current evaluation systems really provide an accurate account of an individual's performance?

The second area for investigation is individual verses policy perspectives. Can what is just and fair to an individual be in conflict with a policy that attempts to correct long-standing injustice? Is establishing quotas (or their look-alikes) for minorities and women in various selective processes like promotions, schooling, command, and other visible assignments fair? Does it uphold Army standards? How do Senior Leaders resolve their roles as individuals, Soldiers and principals in Civil military relations?

The third area examines the Army Value of Loyalty, which has been identified as misunderstood and often is at the root of ethical conflict? How does a person resolve loyalty to the organizational position or policy versus adherence to personal conviction when the two are in conflict? What are the effects of disagreement with your Commander or the President? Due to their elevated level of responsibilities and visibility, strategic leaders are held to higher expectations and receive increased scrutiny.

Together with the foundational modules, *The Army Profession as Our Unifying Purpose and Context* and *Investing in Character Development*, this module promotes learning in the higher categories of the cognitive and affective domains. Learning new material, applying the learning, and engaging in topic discussion is the suggested method.

